

**Electoral structure review - Greater Geelong City Council - Response Submission  
Robert Penfold - Clifton Springs - 25 July 2023, 08:07 pm**

Please consider my comments below re the changes of Ward Structure on the Bellarine Peninsula.

Having lived through a few of these reviews during my time, I have an understanding of how important it is to get these structures correct.

In about 2006 a review happened.

the communities of Drysdale Clifton Springs were divided into two different Council Wards - I remember how disconnected I and the people felt from my greater community during that time and I am committed to hopefully never see that happen again.!

That the Local Government Act 2020 called for all Councils to have Single Councillor Wards, and through trying to do this, it was to have equal numbers of community members in each Ward is unrealistic.!

This is a "head-count" result only, with no consideration of how the general public in the area work & play and use local resources to advantage for all age groups and all types & classes of people.!

This results in Ward boundaries being drawn up dividing communities of interest. ie Sporting, dancing, music, schooling and many other activities ranging from younger to older people.

These groups rely on important companion relationships and social and mental anguish will / has been the result.!

That is what has been proposed this time with the 3 models offered through the review. All of these result in harm to segregated communities

During the last 7 years, Bellarine has been covered by a single Ward with three Councillors and for a number of those years we have even had the Mayor in our Ward.

During this period all the Community Associations on the Bellarine have come together to work on issues, share information and help with advocacy.

It has been the closest to going back to the Bellarine Shire as we have had in 30 years.

The VEC needs to assess the public's multitude of requirements and needs in, & of an area, before randomly revising boundaries to suit "counting heads" for Ward boundaries and the number of councillors required.

We are a people's community not just a number of heads.!

I recommend you respectfully not proceed with your 1, 2 & 3 option and you reconsider your options.

PLEASE take into account the daily needs & requirements of all of people's community needs.

Also, please take into special account, all of the Bellarine Communities / Committees currently on the Bellarine Peninsula and understand how they work, AND how they will be affected by your decisions !

We live in a democratic society where people come together to determine the way we live, Not by being told "this is better because the numbers look better".

That ignores the wishes of the people & communities and how they currently work.!

We have had 3 Councillors for our Ward of Bellarine for the last 7 years. The Local Government Act was changed in 2020 to mean that all Metropolitan and Regional Councils must have Single Councillor Wards.

I am most worried when communities of interest are split as happened to Drysdale / Clifton Springs approx. 17 years ago.

It seems very wrong that these proposals are "developed" without multiple inputs from the major community groups from each of the townships and other inputs from other affected groups.

It is also unconceivable that the Bellarine would be divided into 3 separate wards with three separate councillors representing each ward.

We know everyone is different, and each Councillor representing each ward will have personal attributes, likes & preferences for certain things, ability to communicate/ convince /argue the needs required, and general character traits.

For these three councillors to represent separate wards effectively is a completely impossible and a degeneration of our current three Councillor / one ward current system and has potential to cause anguish between Wards.! (especially if a road divides the Wards & jealousy is present by neighbouring Wards)

Our current system handles a multi-cultural / multi-ability society very effectively, to change it would be a disaster.!

I would suggest that the VEC panel strongly & effectively review their work before doing any more, and to incorporate groups & people from around our community before you propose any amendments to our one ward / three councillors system.

I don't believe I have explained the issue and effects with the proposed the Ward / three separate Councillor system effectively.

ie. Please refer to this scenario :-

If you consider the VFL football competition with the Geelong Cats being backed by a community of Geelong.

But then the VFL (or the VEC in the above case with the Bellarine.!) decided to disband the "Geelong Cats" and replace them with North Geelong, South Geelong, East Geelong and West Geelong team.!

Then the community reaction would be devastating as all the Geelong supporters would be disorientated and would stop supporting the VFL..!!

This represents a similarity to what VEC is doing to the Bellarine District and VEC need to recognise how our community works and prospers..!!

VEC needs to recognise this and consult effectively with the proven fabric of our society.!

Thank you,  
Bob Penfold

email :- 

Ps, I have had a number of goes at writing this over several weeks, I hope it reads ok.